

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5549
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 0348

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, MILI, HO

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATION WITH COL. ELVIR SIERRA,
PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 0219

1. AMBASSADOR BECKER AND MILGP COMMANDER MET WITH COL. CESAR ELVIR SIERRA, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL, ON JANUARY 19. WITH REGARD TO THE ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS WITH EL SALVADOR, ELVIR SAID THAT THE OUTBREAKS OF VIOLENCE ALONG THE BORDER LAST SUMMER HAD A POSITIVE AFFECT IN TERMS OF SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE MEDIATION AGREEMENT. IN ADDITION, THE TWO SIDES ARE ONCE AGAIN TALKING AND HAVE DELINEATED THE BORDER CLAIMS IN THE DISPUTED AREAS IN THE ACT OF MANAGUA, THUS PROVIDING A BASIS FOR NEGOTIATION. ELVIR FIRMLY BELIEVES THAT NO PROGRESS ON A PEACE AGREEMENT CAN BE ACHIEVED UNTIL THE BORDER IS DELINEATED. HE STATED THAT, OF THE SIX POCKETS IN DISPUTE, TWO SHOULD BE EASILY RESOLVED, TWO RELATIVELY EASILY, AND TWO WILL PRESENT DIFFICULTIES. ELVIR INDICATED THAT IF AN AGREEMENT IS REACHED
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ON THE FIRST FOUR POCKETS IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH EL SALVADOR PRIOR TO SETTLEMENT OF THE TWO MOST DIFFICULT POCKETS. HE BELIEVED THAT THE CURRENT MEDIATION AGREEMENT IS ONLY AN INTERIM STEP AND THAT FINAL AGREEMENT WILL HAVE TO BE ACHIEVED THROUGH ARBITRATION (PROBABLY THE TWO MOST DIFFICULT POCKETS). SUBSEQUENT TO THE CENTRAL AMERICAN CHIEFS OF STATE MEETING IN MANAGUA ON JANUARY 18, THE

HONDURAN AND SALVADORAN CHIEFS OF STATE HELD PRIVATE MEETINGS WHICH WERE CHARACTERIZED AS FRIENDLY. PRESIDENT MOLINA SAID HE INTENDED TO SUBMIT THE MEDIATION AGREEMENT TO THE SALVADOR LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND STATED THAT HE BELIEVED IT WILL BE RATIFIED. HOWEVER, ELVIR INDICATED THAT HE BELIEVES THE ISSUE OF A SETTLEMENT WITH HONDURAS HAS BECOME SO SENSITIVE WITHIN EL SALVADOR THAT ANY AGREEMENT CEDING TERRITORY TO HONDURAS WOULD JEOPARDIZE THE EXISTENCE OF THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, ELVIR BELIEVES THAT THE GOH HAS RECENTLY BECOME STRONGER AND MORE STABLE AND THAT WITH HIS CONSOLIDATION OF POWER, CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR'S GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ABLE TO SURVIVE AN AGREEMENT CEDING TERRITORY TO EL SALVADOR. AMBASSADOR BECKER ASKED ELVIR WHETHER HE BELIEVED THAT OUTSIDE PRESSURE ON THE TWO GOVERNMENTS WOULD ASSIST IN ARRIVING AT A SETTLEMENT, TO WHICH ELVIR REPLIED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. ELVIR SAID THAT HE FELT THE MOST APPROPRIATE CHANNEL FOR SUCH PRESSURE WAS THROUGH THE REGIONAL AND/OR HEMISPHERIC CREDIT INSTITUTIONS AND THAT THE U.S. COULD BE HELPFUL IN APPLYING PRESSURE THROUGH THOSE AGENCIES; HOWEVER, THE U.S. SHOULD NOT APPLY PRESSURE DIRECTLY.

2. WITH RESPECT TO THE AGRARIAN REFORM LAW, ELVIR REMARKED THAT THE LAW DID CONTAIN CERTAIN IMPERFECTIONS, INCLUDING SOME THAT COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE RURAL POOR. HE FURTHER COMMENTED THAT, DUE TO ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND STABILITY OF THE COUNTRY, THE NORTH COAST WAS LARGELY EXEMPTED FROM THE APPLICATION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM LAW. AMBASSADOR BECKER
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INDICATED HIS INTEREST IN THE AREA BUT SAID THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO INTERFERE IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GOH AND THE FRUIT COMPANIES.

3. REFERRING TO THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL, ELVIR SAID THAT IT IS AN ORGANIZATION MADE UP OF ALL SECTORS OF THE HONDURAN SOCIETY, AND THAT ITS PRIME PURPOSE IS TO RETURN THE COUNTRY TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT. IN ADDITION, THE VARIOUS SECTORS REPRESENTED ON THE COUNCIL CAN RAISE ISSUES OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO THEM FOR CONSIDERATION. ELVIR STATED THAT HE ASSUMED THE PRESIDENCY OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON A FULL-TIME BASIS, GIVING UP HIS POSITION AS CHIEF OF STAFF, BECUASE MANY MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL FELT THAT THE COUNCIL WAS NOT RECEIVING SUFFICIENT GOH ATTENTION. ELVIR STATED THAT HE WORKED OUT THE CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE ADVISORY COUNCIL AND THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL WITH EITHER GENERAL CHINCHILLA (DEFMIN) ANDMXZZR#GENERAL PAZ (CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES). IN THE EVENT THAT THEY WERE PURELY POLITICAL CONFLICTS, ELVIR TAKES THE ISSUES UP DIRECTLY WITH CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR.

4. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED COL. ELVIR IF THERE WERE CURRENTLY ANY PROJECTS BEFORE THE ADVISORY COUNCIL IN THE CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL, OR NUTRITIONAL FIELDS WHERE THE U.S. MIGHT BE ABLE TO BE OF ASSISTANCE AND THEIR RELATIVE PRIORITY. THE AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO OBTAIN ASSISTANCE FROM EITHER PRIVATE OR OFFICIAL U.S. SOURCES. ELVIR SAID THAT ASSISTANCE WOULD BE WELCOMED IN OBTAINING ADDITIONAL BOOKS FOR THE NATIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM AND IN RENOVATING THE CASA DE LA CULTURA IN COMAYAGUA.
BECKER

NOTE BY OCT: #TEXT AS RECEIVED.

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